CLAIMS:

1.   Apparatus for determining the award of a plurality of prizes having respective prize values, the apparatus including:

5   memory for storing data indicative of a current prize value;

an input device being responsive to input signals from a respective plurality of gaming terminals for providing an increment signal;

a controller for defining the current prize value as a first of the prize values and being responsive to the increment signal for incrementing an accumulated value toward the current

10   prize value; and

a comparator being responsive to the current prize value and the accumulated value for determining if the current prize value is to be awarded and, if so, generating an award signal that actuates the controller to define the current prize value as a second of the prize values.

15   2.   Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the prize values fall within a range between an upper prize value and a lower prize value and the memory also contains data indicative of the upper prize value and the lower prize value.

3.   Apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the controller is responsive to the upper prize

20   value and the lower prize value for determining the second of the prize values.

4.   Apparatus according to claim 2 or claim 3, wherein a prize value is determined to fall alternately between:

the current prize value and the upper prize value; and

25   the current prior prize value and the lower prize value.

5.   Apparatus according to any of claim 2 to 4, wherein upon determination that the current prize value is to be awarded, the accumulated value is reset to one or other of the upper prize value or the lower prize value.

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6.   Apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the accumulated value is alternately reset to the upper prize value and the lower prize value.

7.   Apparatus according to any of claims 1 to 6, wherein the terminals are respective gaming machines.

8.   Apparatus according to any of claims 1 to 6, wherein the terminals are computer devices such as stand alone desktop computers.

9.   Apparatus according to any of claims 1 to 6, wherein the terminals include gaming machines and computer devices.

10.   Apparatus according to claim 8 or claim 9, wherein the computer devices are linked to the apparatus via web-enabled or other online interfaces.

11.   Apparatus according to any of claims 1 to 10, further including a payout device that is responsive to the increment signal and the award signal for selecting the terminal to which the prize is awarded.

12.   Apparatus according to claim 11, wherein each terminal includes a gaming balance and the payout device, upon selecting the terminal, credits the respective gaming balance.

13.   Apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the payout device credits the gaming balance by the accumulated value.

14.   Apparatus according to any of claims 1 to 13, further including a display driver for providing persons using the terminals with a visual indication of the accumulated value.

15.   Apparatus according to claim 14 when dependent upon claim 7 or claim 9, wherein the gaming machines are located in an establishment, the display driver is a dedicated hardware and software device that drives an LED display that is prominently located within the establishment.

16.   Apparatus according to claim 14 when dependent upon any of claims 8 to 10, wherein the the display driver is coded into communications protocol between the apparatus and the computer devices.

17.   Apparatus according to any of claims 14 to 16, wherein the driver also provides persons using the terminals with a visual indication of one or more of:

the upper prize value;

the lower prize value; and

whether the accumulated value is incrementing toward the upper or the lower prize value.

18.   Apparatus according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the comparator is part of the controller.

19.   Apparatus for determining the award of a plurality of prizes having respective prize values that fall between an upper prize value and a lower prize value, the apparatus including:

memory for storing data indicative of a current prize value;

an input device being responsive to input signals from a respective plurality of gaming terminals for providing an increment signal;

a controller for defining the current prize value as a first of the prize values and being responsive to the increment signal for incrementing an accumulated value toward the current prize value, whereby the first prize value lies between one of a) the accumulated value and the upper prize value and b) the accumulated value and the lower prize value; and

a comparator being responsive to the current prize value and the accumulated value for determining if the current prize value is to be awarded and, if so, generating an award signal that actuates the controller to define the current prize value as a second of the prize values, whereby the second prize value lies between the other of a) the accumulated value and the upper prize value and b) the accumulated value and the lower prize value.

20.   Apparatus according to claim 19, wherein alternate prize values result in the accumulated value alternately incrementing upwardly and downwardly.

21.   Apparatus according to claim 19, wherein successive prize values are determined to fall alternately between:

the current prize value and the upper prize value; and

the current prior prize value and the lower prize value.

22.   Apparatus according to any of claims 19 to 21, wherein, upon determination that the current prize value is to be awarded, the accumulated value is reset to one or other of the upper prize value or the lower prize value.

5   23.   Apparatus according to claim 22, wherein the accumulated value is alternately reset to the upper prize value and the lower prize value.

24.   Apparatus for determining the award of a plurality of prizes having respective prize values that fall between an upper prize value and a lower prize value, the apparatus including:

10   memory for storing data indicative of a current prize value;

an input device being responsive to input signals from a respective plurality of gaming terminals for providing an increment signal;

a controller for defining the current prize value as a first of the prize values and an accumulated value as one of the upper prize value or the lower prize value, the controller being

15 responsive to the increment signal for incrementing the accumulated value toward the current prize value; and

a comparator being responsive to the current prize value and the accumulated value for determining if the current prize value is to be awarded and, if so, generating an award signal that actuates the controller to define the current prize value as a second of the prize values and to

20 reset the accumulated value to the other of the upper prize value or the lower prize value.

25.   A method for determining the award of a plurality of prizes having respective prize values, the method including:

storing data indicative of a current prize value;

25   being responsive to input signals from a respective plurality of gaming terminals for providing an increment signal;

providing a controller for defining the current prize value as a first of the prize values and being responsive to the increment signal for incrementing an accumulated value toward the current prize value; and

30   being responsive to the current prize value and the accumulated value for determining if the current prize value is to be awarded and, if so, generating an award signal that actuates the controller to define the current prize value as a second of the prize values.

26.   A method for determining the award of a plurality of prizes having respective prize values that fall between an upper prize value and a lower prize value, the apparatus including:

storing data indicative of a current prize value;

being responsive to input signals from a respective plurality of gaming terminals for providing an increment signal;

providing a controller for defining the current prize value as a first of the prize values and being responsive to the increment signal for incrementing an accumulated value toward the current prize value, whereby the first prize value lies between one of the accumulated value and the upper prize value and the accumulated value and the lower prize value; and

being responsive to the current prize value and the accumulated value for determining if the current prize value is to be awarded and, if so, generating an award signal that actuates the controller to define the current prize value as a second of the prize values, whereby the second prize value lies between the other of the accumulated value and the upper prize value and the accumulated value and the lower prize value.

27.   A method for determining the award of a plurality of prizes having respective prize values that fall between an upper prize value and a lower prize value, the method including:

storing data indicative of a current prize value;

being responsive to input signals from a respective plurality of gaming terminals for providing an increment signal;

providing a controller for defining the current prize value as a first of the prize values and an accumulated value as one of the upper prize value or the lower prize value;

being responsive to the increment signal for incrementing the accumulated value toward the current prize value; and

being responsive to the current prize value and the accumulated value for determining if the current prize value is to be awarded and, if so, generating an award signal that actuates the controller to define the current prize value as a second of the prize values and to reset the accumulated value to the other of the upper prize value or the lower prize value.